(e) the steps proposed to carry out high level contacts with the Pakistani Government to persuade them to return all Indian fishing vessels as a gesture of goodwill?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) About 184 boats are presently under the control of Pakistan.

(b) and (c) No, Sir.

(d) Government is constantly taking up with the Government of Pakistan, through diplomatic channels, the matter of release of the remaining Indian fishing boats.

(e) During the visit of External Affairs Minister to Pakistan from February 15-17, 2005, the issue of early release and repatriation of all the Indian fishermen along with their boats was again taken up.

Arrest of Indian fishermen by Sri Lanka

3146. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the fishermen of Indian origin have often been arrested, injured and kept in custody, boats seized by the Sri Lankan Navy on the ground that they have been crossing the border while fishing;

(b) if so, the number of fishermen arrested, injured, released; the number of boats seized; the number of boats released; year-wise, during the last five years;

(c) whether it is a fact that enough initiatives have not been taken by the successive Governments at the Centre to solve this problem once and for all; and

(d) the permanent solution envisaged to solve this perennial problem once and for all?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Indian fishermen who stray across the International Maritime Boundary Line to fish illegally in Sri Lankan waters are sometimes apprehended by Sri Lankan authorities.

(b)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Fishermen arrested	85	116	606	109	Nil
Fishermen released	85	115	603	109	Nil
Boats seized	22	25	140	23	Nil
Boats released	11	21	50	3	
Boats released but yet to be salvaged		3	7	9	
Boats confiscated			68		
Boats sunk and beyond salvage	11		7	9	
Boats not released and in Sri Lankan custody		1	8	2	

(c) and (d) The release of Indian fishermen apprehended by Sri Lankan authorities after crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line to fish in Sri Lankan waters is regularly taken up by the Government of India through diplomatic channels. The Government of Sri Lanka has undertaken to treat straying fishermen in a humane and sympathetic manner. The crew of seized boats have been released immediately while the coxswain is released after going through the due process of law in Sri Lanka. Following the Tsunami of December 26, 2004 the Government of Sri Lanka released all Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan custody on humanitarian grounds.

The issue has been taken up at the highest levels by the Government of India. After the last visit of the President of Sri Lankan in November, 2004 it was decided to continue with the existing understandings on humane treatment and early release of apprehended fishermen. It was also decided to constitute a Joint Working Group that would meet frequently to deal with issues relating to straying fishermen, work out modalities for prevention of use of force against them and early release of confiscated boats, and explore possibilities of working towards bilateral arrangements for licensed fishing.

Installation of democratic Government in Iraq

3147. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that talks between Kurdish leaders and Shiite block has not arrived at a consensus to form Government in Iraq;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the stumbling bloc to the core issue; and